

STRUCTURE AND PURPOSE

The Congress further declares that in a free society the obligations and privileges of serving in the armed forces and the reserve components thereof should be shared generally, in accordance with a system of selection which is fair and just...

—Military Selective Service Act, 50 U.S.C. App. 451

The Selective Service System (SSS) is an independent, small Federal agency, operating with permanent authorization under the Military Selective Service Act. It is not part of the Defense Department; however, it exists to serve the emergency manpower needs of the Defense Department if a draft becomes necessary. The Agency remains ready to implement a draft of untrained manpower, or personnel with health care skills, if directed by the Congress and the President to do so in a national crisis. The SSS is America's only proven and time-tested hedge against underestimating the number of active duty and Reserve military personnel needed to fight a future conflict. Another part of its statutory mission involves being ready to administer alternative service programs, in lieu

of military service, for men classified as conscientiously opposed to any form of military service.

In peacetime, the Agency is minimally staffed and heavily dependent upon part-time personnel and volunteers throughout the U.S. (see [People](#)) to keep viable the Nation's capability of conducting a draft in a crisis that would be timely, fair, and equitable. As a part of that readiness, virtually all men in the U.S. are required to register with Selective Service within 30 days of reaching age 18 (see [Registration](#)). The registration program is important for America because it reminds every young man of his potential obligation to serve the Nation in an emergency and thus live up to the words of the Constitution's preamble that "We the people...(shall) provide for the common defense." The Selective Service System has been described as the last link between society-at-large and today's all-volunteer Armed Forces. Registration also is important to a man's future, because the Congress, more than half of the Nation's state legislatures, and scores of city councils have conditioned eligibility for several government programs and benefits upon a man being in compliance with the registration requirement. These include student loans and grants, government jobs, job training, and citizenship (for registration-age men who are not yet citizens). Women do not have to register because the law does not include them.



ORGANIZATION CHART

